

Reaction to the public consultation – Sarah Cummings, 22 March 2018

Question 1: Prevention of conflict and instability

How can the Netherlands (government, industry, social enterprises, civil society, knowledge institutions) achieve more results on the themes of conflicts and instability, relief in the region and emergency aid?

[Note on my contribution: I would like to note my appreciation of the public consultation being run by the Ministry. It is wonderful to have the opportunity to contribute inputs to the policy-making process. I have worked in the field of knowledge and information for international development for more than 30 years and, in my answers, I am trying to tap into this experience. As a Dutch citizen and based in the Netherlands, I welcome the possibility to respond to the questions in English, my mother tongue.]

These themes represent huge challenges for the Netherlands, for all sectors mentioned, and call for coordination on an international level. How can better results be achieved? Better results can be achieved if interventions are based on the understanding that they are taking place in complex situations where cause and effect are not immediately visible, making the achievement of results a significant challenge. For this reason, interventions should be based on 1) good research of the complex processes involved; 2) the wishes of local and national stakeholders; and 3) innovative solutions.

To give an example of the complexity in which development interventions are taking place, the EU is aiming to reduce migration from North Africa. It has numerous policies in place, such as the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, which are trying to achieve this objective by addressing the root causes of migration. However, a very recent study (February 2018) from the Centre for Global Development, USA, has demonstrated that economic development in low-income countries typically raises migration and that this will continue for many decades. This research undermines the rationale for the 'root cause of migration' policies, indicating that new approaches are needed.

In such a situation, the Government of the Netherlands has the potential to show leadership, not only to other stakeholders in the Netherlands, but also to the international community. The Netherlands is not only a substantial contributor of development aid but also is seen as a leader in terms of developing new approaches.

Sources

CGD policy paper, "Deterring Emigration with Foreign Aid: An Overview of Evidence from Low-Income Countries," <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/deterring-emigration-foreign-aid-overview-evidence-low-income-countries>.

The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/migration_en

Question 2: Youth employment

How can the Netherlands (government, industry, social enterprises, civil society, knowledge institutions) best address the population growth in Africa and stimulate employment among young people in Africa and the Middle East?

I would propose a multi-stakeholder process to address this complex question in which local stakeholders – from a wider variety of sectors - are in the driving seat. This process should also be built on robust research of the options available and should be transdisciplinary in the sense that it should involve actors from the general public.

Question 3: Reducing poverty and inequality

Which new areas of attention could the government identify? The resources are limited, so we have to choose, therefore also the question: which area of interest needs less emphasis?

I would suggest that the Netherlands could make the greatest contribution to reducing poverty and inequality by developing and supporting interventions in international governance which aim to reduce poverty and inequality. The Netherlands could work with civil society organisations – for example, Oxfam - who have a vision of the current status and what needs to be done to address the trend towards increasing global inequality.

Given that world-wide women and girls are also the ones most suffering from poverty and inequality, projects and programmes should be designed to improve the position of women while recognising that women are embedded in complex social structures which require long-term, gradual socially accepted change rather than quick fixes which might make them more vulnerable.

Sources

Oxfam International (2018) Reward work, not wealth

<https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/reward-work-not-wealth>

Anastasia A. Seferiadis Sarah Cummings, Jeroen Maas, Joske F.G. Bunders Marjolein B.M. Zweekhorst (2017) A dynamic framework for strengthening women's social capital: strategies for community development in rural Bangladesh. Community Development Journal, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsx011>

Question 4: Sustainability

What innovative solutions can the Dutch government, NGOs and the business sector encourage to 1) reduce CO2 emissions (climate mitigation) and 2) help societies to adapt to climate change (climate adaptation)?

No answer

Question 5: Sustainability

Where do you think there are opportunities to make progress in production, trade and investment on societal challenges in the social field (such as better working conditions, higher wages, extra opportunities for women and young people) or on an ecological level (such as water, climate, biodiversity)?

No answer

Question 6: Fair trade

Do you have concrete suggestions for how the government can promote that international trade and investments contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals?

No answer

Question 7: Profitability of the Netherlands

With which innovative and creative solutions and in which areas could the government better support the business community and knowledge institutions to market knowledge and expertise worldwide?

The Knowledge Cities initiative is a new way in which knowledge in developed countries is being linked in a global network to stimulate the knowledge capacities – often private sector – in LMICs. This is very much a new initiative which is gaining considerable traction in countries themselves with Knowledge Weeks planned in 2018 in Kampala, Nairobi and elsewhere.

Source

Knowledge Cities: <https://www.knowledge.city/knowledge-cities/> and <https://www.knowledge.city/news/>

Question 8: Excellent service

How can the business community and in particular SMEs be better supported in the process of internationalization in all necessary areas, and in which markets does this merit extra support?

Research into the role of the private sector in development could be supported so that it can provide good advice to the private sector of small and medium enterprises (MKB) in the Netherlands. However, there are some good cases and in-depth research into these cases could be used to develop a manual for small and medium enterprises. There also need to be brokers – even possibly from the private sector – who are experts in this process. The CBI could be seen as an excellent example of this sort of initiative.

The NWO-WOTRO research project, ‘An unusual suspect: the private sector in knowledge brokering in international development’ is an example of research which is aiming at in-depth analysis of the private sector. It will produce a manual as well as research articles.

Sources

<https://www.cbi.eu/>

<https://unusalsuspect.org/about/>

Question 9: Finally

In addition to your contribution to the above questions, do you have other recommendations in the area of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation?

The Netherlands has, over a long period, developed a critical mass of initiatives concerning the role of knowledge in development cooperation. It is often seen as a leader in this field, and many of these initiatives have received support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These include not only the established knowledge institutes but also multi-stakeholder partnerships such as the five knowledge platforms (2014 onwards) as well as the IKM Emergent Research Programme (2007-2012). I would argue that it is important to build on the critical mass of these initiatives and learn from their experiences for future knowledge-related work.

One international initiative that I would like to bring to your attention from the perspective of knowledge is the Agenda Knowledge for Development (Brandner and Cummings 2017) which is the result of a process covering more than three years, aimed at building a global knowledge partnership for the development of peaceful, wealthy, inclusive and sustainable societies. Designed to complement the Sustainable Development Goals from the perspective of knowledge, the Agenda currently comprises 13 Knowledge Development Goals and 73 personal statements from wide variety of people, ranging from the Director General of UNESCO, many experts and academics, to students at the beginning of their professional careers. The Knowledge for Development Partnership is currently developing a new edition of the Agenda Knowledge for Development, due for publication in May 2018 to correspond with a planned Global Partnership Conference in Nairobi. In this new edition, we will be publishing 100+ statements and will improve the Knowledge Development Goals further, reflecting the new statements.

Sources

Cummings, S.J.R. (2017) The missing ingredient? Adding knowledge to Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. 8 November 2017, The Broker online.

<http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Blogs/Inclusive-Economy-Africa/The-missing-ingredient-Adding-knowledge-to-Agenda-2030-and-the-Sustainable-Development-Goals>

Brandner, A, and S.J.R. Cummings (2017) Agenda Knowledge for Development: strengthening the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Vienna: Knowledge for Development Partnership. <https://k4dp.org/agenda/>

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Knowledge at the heart of sustainable development

